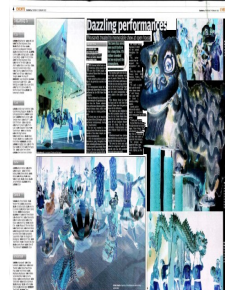


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Dazzling performances

Thousands treated to memorable show at open house

By EDMUND NGO

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Photos by SAIFUL BAHARI

and RONNIE CHIN

THE Sitiawan Airfield took on a boisterous, festive mood with more than 65,000 people at the national Chinese New Year open house recently.

People started to arrive as early as 4pm to be greeted by countless red lanterns.

The entertainment kicked off at 5.30pm with Chinese New Year songs performed by the SMK Nam Hwa orchestra.

This was followed by a 24-Seasons (representing the 24 agricultural seasons from the Chinese calendar) drum performance featuring 220 traditional Chinese drums, which took to the stage in a rousing performance.

The lively beat set the mood for lion dancers from 250 troupes, which performed simultaneously, leaving the crowd dazzled.

The feat was recorded in the Malaysia Book of Records as the most number of lion dance troupes performing simultaneously.

A host of entertainment kept the momentum going throughout the night, including performances by veteran local artiste Zainal Abidin, Victor Wong of the duo group Michael & Victor and teenage sensation Shruti.

The Saturday night event also featured violin and saxophone renditions of popular Chinese New Year songs as well as dance performances. A world-class lion-dancing performance by the Kun Seng Keng Dragon and Lion Dance Association, which won the world championship 44 times, added to the night's excitement.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor were the guests of honour for the celebration.

The crowd was also delighted to meet MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek, Perak Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir, Lumut MP and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha, and Information, Communications and

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Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

Wheelchair-bound Intan Syafinas Mohd Bakhid was among the myriad of people who thronged the event.

"The town has never seen such fanfare for a long time," said the 16-year-old, who has been paralysed from waist down since birth.

Her cousin Nazatul Aliya Nazri, 15, wheeled her around throughout the night.

"It's rather

crowded but we enjoyed the atmosphere," she said.

Form Five student A. Yuvaraj from SMJK Dindings, Pundut, felt privileged to attend the event.

"It's such a grand affair and the whole nation knows about it," said Yuvaraj, who came with his friend L.

Ganesh, a college student.

Ganesh said he had seen the nation's leaders on television and in newspapers, but never in person.

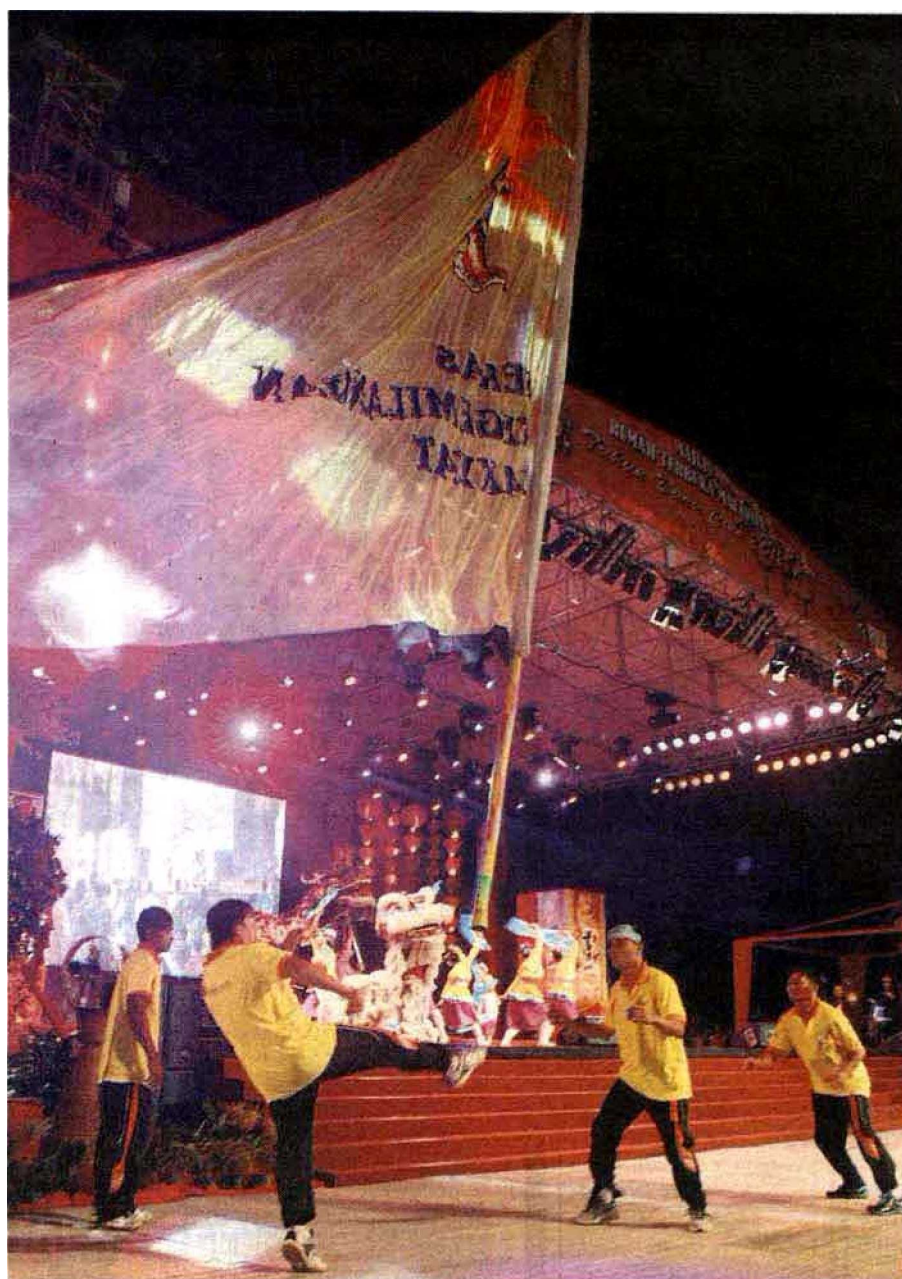
"It feels good," he said.

For Saw Wen Yee, it was also the night she met her favourite singer, Victor Wong. "This will definitely be a Chinese New Year to remember," said Saw, who studies at Universiti Utara Malaysia.

The evening was capped off with a spectacular display of fireworks, lighting up the sky.

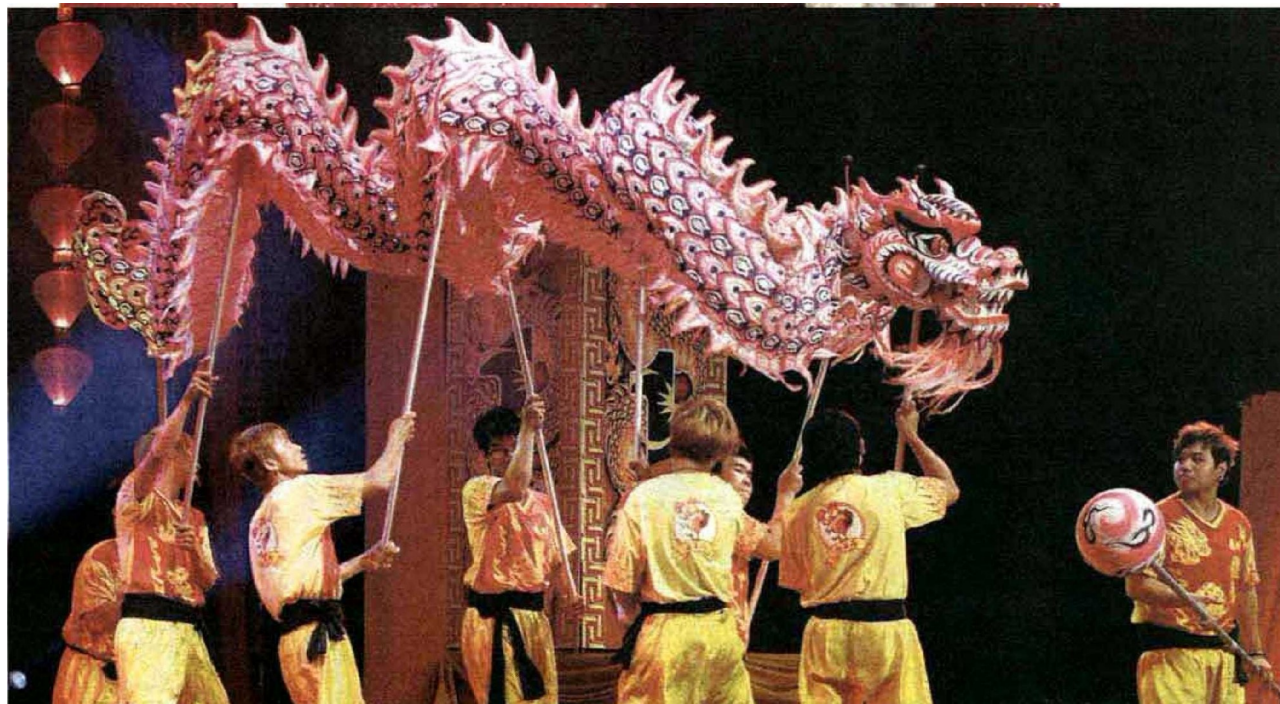
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- INTAN SYAFINAS MOHD BAKHID



Balancing act: An amazing Chingay performance.

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Follow the ball: The dragon dance troupe captivated the crowd with their colourful performance.



Ethnic touch: A variety of East Malaysian dances being performed.

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